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Citizen Bush, available.

GEORGE BUSH is the unsullied American, who, once again, emerges as the most trusted, respected — and mobile — figure in the Republican party.

To President Ford and the GOP he is the trustworthy, loyal and totally acceptable man to folks around the country and all the ships at sea.

The man who can be anywhere, at anytime, the party or country beckons. But by now George Bush must be wondering if life is all this good.

Mr. Ford now has lifted the tall Texan from his pioneering post in Peking as the American liaison to China and tossed him into his latest adventure—the extremely sensitive position as Director of a Central Intelligence Agency treading water in finger-pointing and low moral.

It is the fourth "vote of confidence" bestowed upon the former Texas Congressman who was the man Richard Nixon passed over to choose Spiro T. Agnew on the most ill-fated ticket of all time. And later ignored as Ford choose Nelson Rockefeller.

To multiple thousands, undoubtedly including Nixon, there is this clinging belief that if the brilliant and impeccable Texan had ridden in as Vice President on the GOP '70 landslide, there would never have been a Watergate with its wrecking ripples.

To know George Bush is to know that he would not for an instant have countenanced the tawdry operations of the Nixon inner sanctum. He not only would have quit, he would have exposed.

His judgment and integrity was what the White House needed—not the Teutonic arrogance of the Haldemans and Ehrlichmans, et al, operating in political knavery.

But it didn't happen. It was Agnew, not Bush, in the clutch decision pre-dawn hours at Miami Beach in '70.

Since that day he has been through a wringer of twists and turns that would be incredible to anyone except those practicing the art of political expediency. He has been the "used" good guy. The image man.

He is the man Democrat National Committee chairman Bob Strauss teamed with in a golf game at Preston Trail simply because "He's a helluva nice guy."

ON THE SAME Dallas golf course months later George Bush was the man Gerald R. Ford identified, between booming tee shots and fluffed short pitches, to this writer as "one of the strongest of men."

So why, this fate that seems inexorably to come to George Bush?

Why should he willingly walk into a CIA situation that could keep exploding—until the very presence of George Bush would quiet it? He must know, as hinted by others, that there are additional layers of potential dynamite secretly stashed in CIA's deepest cellars. That this urgently needed intelligence agency has been misused, perhaps, by conniving hands.

Well, again, to know George Bush is to know the answer. He believes in the torch of enlightenment and if there are skeletons to be rattled in the CIA

he will rattle hell out of 'em to the nearest exit and get on with the business of giving the United States international intelligence clothed in credibility and recaptured morale.

The old Princeton football player is competitive. He believes in the rules, and he lives by them. He don't yield too much, as delegates to the United Nations learned when he served there as U.S. Ambassador—another job thrust upon him. It was not the tastiest morsel they could hand him in lieu of the Vice Presidency, but he took it and chewed on it in forthrightness in bitter UN times.

He became a resolute figure the friendly and unfriendly nations held in high respect. His iron jaw and piercing eyes stilled the chatter when he spoke the U.S. position.

The same qualifications got him into another job and abruptly ended the rising UN career when Nixon called him to chairmanship of a shambolic GOP national committee. He loathed and denounced, never covered or defended, the evils of Watergate.

And then came the third call—the first American to represent this country in the tedious warming process with China. It has been a lonely and demanding job. He has performed without a fumble.

Now, CIA. If you look back over the score card, it has not been the best of worlds for 52-year-old soldier George Bush, who just might have been President of the United States.

(Felix R. McKnight is vice chairman of The Times Herald.)